Social Action Digest

Editor: Hubert F. Schiffer, S.J.
College of Business Administration
Loyola University
New Orleans 18, La.

Contents:

Archbishop O'Boyle:.....Be Courageous!
The Tablet:.....More Aid to Tito
P. Crane:.....The "Welfare" State
J. Fitzpatrick: The White-Collar Society

Vol. II, No. 2 February 1959

BE COURAGEOUS!

Excerpts from a sermon by Archbishop Patrick O'Boyle, Washington, D.C.

Archbishop O'Boyle praised government leaders for their stand against tyranny and said they should be aided not undercut by timorous, faint-hearted "Liberals" who "seek the peace of appeasement and betrayal" in dealing with the Communist bloc.

"Apathy, indifference and lack of moral principles will only spur the aggressor," the Archbishop warned in a sermon in St.Matthew's Cathedral in Washington. "Blackmail begets blackmail and compromise begets compromise. To have real peace, we must be resolute in our principles, courageous in their application."

Leaders Should Be Aided Not Undercut

Archbishop O'Boyle said that when leaders of government "desire to stand for principles, to stand fast against tyranny and to proclaim the value of freedom for all men, they should be supported and not be undercut by the timorous and faint-hearted so-called liberals." He quoted with approval from a recent address by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in which the Secretary said: "Communism is stubborn for the wrong; let us be steadfast for the right. A capacity to change is indispensable. Equally indispensable is the capacity to hold fast to what is good."

The Archbishop described these as "courageous words" and said they "express high principles that should ever be our guides when we deal with the Communist world."

Adding to Victims Misery

Speaking on the plight of the victims of Communist persecution, the Archbishop warned that Americans "by our own conduct" may add to their sufferings in two ways -- by forgetting their sufferings and weakening in devotion to the rights of man.

SOCIAL ACTION DIGEST (published monthly, except July and August) presents applications of sound principles to the concrete problems of modern life, especially in economics, by printing excerpts of articles and speeches by well qualified experts. Thus, SOCIAL ACTION DIGEST hopes to stimulate intelligent discussions and promote ACTION to strengthen the private enterprise system and the ideals of freedom in a democratic society.

* * * * Please, show SOCIAL ACTION DIGEST to your friends * * * *

Subscription: $1.00 a year; Single copy: 10¢ (incl. postage).

He said: "Sympathy and understanding can make bearable the cruelest pains. And, in the wisdom of God, He has given us the power to help through our prayers, our penances and sufferings those martyred souls whose names we may never know. But if we fail them they have the added sorrow of knowing that they are forgotten, alone in the face of monstrous tyranny, and the bitterness of loneliness is as gall and vinegar."

Archbishop O'Boyle continued: "Secondly, we can betray them by weakening in our devotion to truth, to liberty and to the rights of man. ... What great American statesmen expressed in ringing words, other Americans expressed in immortal deeds. At Valley Forge, Chateau Thierry and Iwo Jima there was heroism that symbolized beyond the power of words our devotion to freedom. This is the America we have learned and loved..."

****

MORE AID TO COMMUNIST TITO ?

Is anyone naive enough to believe that aid to a Communist dictator will help "the people"? It will be used primarily to strengthen the stranglehold of the party functionaries and their followers -- murderers and criminals. Thus, it will be an additional incentive for anti-communists to give up the fight and join the party to secure their survival. These are the facts of Communist life. Just how moral, or immoral, is this part of foreign aid?

The following is an excerpt from an article entitled "Yugoslavs Get More U.S. Funds" in THE TABLET (1 Hanson Place,Brooklyn 17,N.Y.)Jan.3,1959,p.2.

The United States on Monday, Dec. 22, signed an agreement with Yugoslavia granting this Communist country nearly $95 million in economic aid. Washington is also studying a Yugoslav request for $100 million in long-term credits. Construction of a nitrogenous fertilizer plant with a capacity of 370,000 gross tons has already been approved in principle. The estimated cost of the plant is $22,500,000.

The newest assistance will bring to about $900 million the American economic aid to Yugoslavia since 1950. In addition, Yugoslavia obtained military aid estimated to total about about $700 million since 1950. It is expected that another agreement on a long range credit will be signed soon in Washington. The program was endangered by the cancellation of a $280 million credit by Russia last Spring.

Let's add it up, friends: $900 million U.S. economic aid
plus $700 million U.S. military aid

Total: $1,600 million to gangsters who call themselves a "government". (Yugoslavia's population: 16.2 million)

****

T H E " W E L F A R E " S T A T E

Excerpts from a timely article "The Moral Aspect of State Welfare", by Paul Crane, in THE MONTH (114 Mount St., London, W.1), Oct.1958, pp. 197-205. Reprinted with kind permission of the Editor.

Man's development as a person is bound up with the use of his human powers, which will express itself in a type of action at once responsible, self-reliant, and free. He can claim as his basic right in society that which intitles him to the opportunity of freely shaping his life by responsible activity within the framework of God's law.

Family upbringing constitutes an essential part of this opportunity. To be

enlarged, as it should, it requires the wider grouping of village and commune, voluntary associations, neighborhood grouping, civic community, nation and State. Each has a varied part to play in the enlargement of man's basic opportunity, but all share this in common, that they exist ultimately for that purpose. In the last analysis, the common good of a country is measured by the ability of its citizens to live at a level of responsible activity, and from this it follows that the purpose of government, which is the common good, may be more closely defined, negatively, as not impeding their inclination to do so, and, positively, as furthering it to the utmost of its capacity. The task of government, therefore, is essentially subsidiary. It is meant to assist and encourage, but never to impede the responsible initiative of individual citizens and lesser associations within the civic community.

It is in the light of this principle of subsidiarity that one has to judge the goodness or badness of that social arrangement which is known everywhere today as the WELFARE STATE. It may be described as a situation in which government provides the community with certain goods, services and insurance benefits which, in the normal course of events, the responsible citizen would provide for himself. It becomes clear at once that such an arrangement represents a usurpation by government of its essentially subsidiary function. Under such circumstances, what government is really doing, however good the intention of those in charge, is too prevent the individual citizen from becoming himself through the responsible exercise of his human powers. Such a system may not be cruel; but it is inhuman because its essence is to prevent a man from acting as responsibly as he should and so turning himself into a true human being.

Failure of Government

The existence of a Welfare State bears witness not to the success of government in promoting the common good, but to its failure. This has been pointed out very clearly by Dr. Cornelius Lucey, the Bishop of Cork: "The State," he says, "whose citizens cannot afford to own their own houses, pay their own doctors' and hospital bills, feed and clothe their own children, etc., is failing in its primary duty to them: the very extent of its free services is proof of its failure as a government for the common good." Nothing could be clearer or more true than that.

Because it is of the nature of State Welfare to represent a usurpation by government of its subsidiary function, its impact on the individual citizen must take the form of an unwarranted constriction of his opportunity of acting responsibly. This leads, in turn, to a weakening of individual and family responsibility.

"Management of one's income," said Lord Beveridge, "is an essential part of the citizen's freedom." (in "Full Employment in a Free Society") To see the more easily that this must be so, one has only to think of what would happen to the individual free man if the management of his income were taken entirely out of his hands. His opportunity of responsible action would be constricted at once to the point where his status became that of a slave -- that is, a situation in which he was no longer able to provide for his own wants, but had them provided entirely for him. If this kind of slavery is to be condemned, as it must be, one must condemn also that constriction of opportunity which occurs when, under State Welfare, a large part of a man's income is taken from him and managed for him by a beneficent, humanitarian State. He has no control over this part, but is forced to take it back in the shape of various goods and services provided by government on its own terms. For the availability of these goods and services the citizen is dependent on government decision and good will.

A Cumulative Totalitarian Trend

The other side of the medal, which sees the Welfare State as constricting a man's opportunity of acting responsibly, sees it also as thrusting him simultaneously into a position of proletarian dependence on government power. The indignity of this proceeding is not recognized by a materialist mentality, which measures happiness in

terms of mere material possessions and identifies poverty with proletarianism. Most people in the West today would prefer a well-fed proletarian status under State Welfarism to the proud independence of a poor peasant.

A further effect follows the management by government, under State Welfare, of so large a part of the citizen's income. (Colin Clark estimated four years ago that, under State Welfare, the manual worker and his family are being taxed at the rate of £ 1 (1 pound) per person per week. There has been no change since then.) It is that the individual grows accustomed gradually to this management. He becomes content to have much of his income taken away and managed for him by an increasingly omni-competent Welfare State. Having been treated like a child, he tends to become like a child and, to the extent that he does so, the need to treat him as such becomes more and more apparent to his materialistically-minded masters. In this process there are the seeds of a cumulative totalitarian trend.

Weakening of Family Ties

All that has just been said of the effect on the individual citizen of government management of a great part of his income, can be said likewise of the family. The purpose of giving it special consideration here is to give the screw of the argument a further twist. The upbringing imparted by the family to its members schools them in general character formation and develops, in particular, habits of responsibility and self-reliance. For this reason family living may be said to constitute the major part of that basic opportunity of acting responsibly which belongs by right to every human being. Out of this comes the need that the family should be financially independent in order that its intimacy may be protected and remain as the best guarantee of an upbringing which is Christian and sound. From this it follows that the father of a family has the right not only to provide for its living, but to provide for it directly out of that which he earns by way of wage or salary each week.

Family upbringing is struck at when the Welfare State curtails, as it must do largely in practice, the father's right of providing directly for himself, his wife and his children. In illustration, we take the example of Britain's National Health Service. Its cost for 1958-59 is estimated at £704 millions, a sum of money greater than that taken by government in taxation on alcoholic drinks and tobacco. Our argument is not weakened if, for the sake of clarity, the two are assumed equal. Were the taxation on alcohol and tobacco remitted by the amount found necessary to provide for the nation's health, two things would happen. There would be no government health service and the price of alcoholic drinks and tobacco would fall by the amount of the tax with the result that weekly incomes in the pockets of wage and salary earners would go further than before. Their real incomes would have increased. Under these circumstances, there would be made to rest on the shoulders of the father of the family, where it most certainly belongs, the decision to drink and smoke his increase in income or to use it to provide by insurance or otherwise against the contingency of ill-health striking the members of his family.

To the extent that the father makes such provision on his own initiative, he and his family act in a more responsible and, therefore, human way than they are able to do under State provision. Consequently, they come closer to that ideal of human fulfillment in the service of God, which is the objective of a Christian philosophy of life and which it is the business of a sound social order never to hinder, but always to assist as much as possible.

At this point one is liable to be confronted with the case of the irresponsible father, who does smoke and drink the difference. Are his wife and children to be left to suffer ill-health? The answer must be no. Here, if necessary, is where the State or Local Authority comes in as a means of last resort. Supporters of the Welfare State seem to argue that because some people act irresponsibly, all should be placed in a position which makes responsible action increasingly difficult. It is rather like arguing that, because some people crossing the street are liable to get killed, the citizenry should be confined by law to the pavement.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

https://archive.org/details/modern-society_1959-02_2_2

By contrast, under that system whereby the State provides for the family's health and the father no longer does so directly, the bond which binds the members of the family closer together in growing and mutual responsibility and affection, is slackened; the current of love is short-circuited and every member of the family is the poorer for the loss of that opportunity of Christian and human activity which is now denied them. Family ties are weakened.

Destruction of Personality

As the citizen's choice is constricted, his opportunity of choosing at all is held increasingly on government terms. Finally, his saving is done for him by the government, through the taxation exacted to provide him with "free" services and through the inflation engendered by State Welfare, which leaves him still further without the inclination to save. A large part of his livelihood is in the gift of government. He is left, for the most part, without property of his own and, as time goes on, without any strong desire to accumulate any. His saving is done for him by the State and property is held for him in common by the State. Not only is he a proletarian, owing all increasingly to State power, dependent on it and defenseless against it. His materialism, so far as one can see, makes him disturbingly satisfied to remain in such a condition.

Underlying the whole of the issue discussed in this article is a basic criterion. It is that the moral health of a society is to be found always in the strength of its desire to expand continually the field of personal responsibility, drawing new classes of the population persistently into the opportunity of productive property-owning, encouraging the citizen to make his own way forward, never tying his hopes to the vagaries of overcentralized State power. By contrast, the way of an unhealthy society -- of one that is materialistic though humanitarian, but never Christian -- is always destructive of the personality of the individual citizen. Its aim is always to do everything for him and his family; less and less to encourage or even allow him to do things responsibly for himself.

****

THE TREND TOWARD A WHITE-COLLAR SOCIETY (Part 1)

Excerpts from an address by Rev. Joseph Fitzpatrick, S.J., professor of Sociology at Fordham University, at the 4th National Catholic Social Action Conference, held at the University of Notre Dame, Sept.5-7,1958.

Within the past two generations, the United States has achieved the ideal which has often been represented as the American dream: it has become a white collar society. In the next two generations, without any doubt, it will push this achievement much farther. The achievement threatens us with just the opposite of what we had expected, threatens us with a loss of individualism, with excessive conformity, extraordinary dependence on group action and organization, and, finally, with depersonalization. However, it would be unwise to allow the threat to obscure the promise.

There are a number of ways of approaching this discussion.

1. We could examine the shift in the nature of the occupations in the United States. In 1956, for the first time, the number of white collar workers exceeded the number of blue collar workers. Occupation is undoubtedly one clear index of a white collar world, but over-emphasis on it would lead us astray. What we call a white collar society reaches far beyond the element of occupation.

2. Secondly, we could examine the incomes associated with white collar work. Middle class income had been associated with white wollar income. It is significant that this is no longer true. However, the fact that blue collar workers

dominate the range of middle incomes does not minimize the fact that the white collar influence dominates our society.

3. Rather what is under discussion here is not so much what work a particular man does, nor what income he receives. What is under discussion is a way of live, a "culture" that is developing. It is a world marked by the technics of atomic power, automation and jet propulsion; it is marked by a need for higher education and more advanced skills; by suburban living and the increase in the number of working wives and mothers; by a kind of mass-produced influence on behavior that gives the appearance of excessive conformity; it is marked by the helplessness of the individual in the presence of huge organizations. Some rather sharp criticisms have been raised against this way of life, but at the same time, the white collar society offers real hope for the first time of man's deliverance from poverty; of a widespread sharing of man's cultural achievements.

White Collar Occupations

Traditionally, "white-collar" occupations were those in which a man got neither his clothes nor his hands dirty. In a world of immigrants and upward mobility, they represented social and economic advancement. They were the symbols of success in the struggle for status in an open class society. They were a much smaller, and a more select group than the farmers and workers who made up the bulk of the labor force.

Now they are no longer small, nor are they particularly select. In 1956, they represented more than 25 million people in the labor force, 39.1% as against 38.7% in blue collar occupations. From 1947 to 1956, employment of production workers in production industries increased by only 5%; employment of non-production workers, chiefly white collar workers, rose 52%.

There are a number of significant things to note about these changes. The largest increase in the labor force in the past 10 years has taken place among professional and technical employees.

A second thing to note is the fact that a considerable amount of the increase in white collar workers is taken up by women. They have gone largely into clerical and sales occupations. More than 28 million women worked at some time during 1956. This phenomenon of women working is definitely related to many aspects of our developing white-collar society. Many of these women are supplementing a husband's income -- not because they need it for survival (which they do not in many cases) -- but often because they need it in order to achieve a higher status, or a higher level of living.

What is striking about this white collar group is the fact that it can no longer be identified with a particular class. It ranges from the highest levels of managerial skill to the humblest levels of a simple sales job. Therefore, the rise of white collar is significant not because it places people on a higher social level, but because it permeates all levels as an expression of a new type of society.

White Collar Income

The significant thing about white collar income, the income of a white collar world, is the fact that it does not go predominantly to white collar workers. I call it white collar income because it is the money that enables the people of our time to purchase the services and symbols of a white collar society. Let us call it middle income. Middle income today is generally placed between $4,000 and $7,500 a year.

The significant thing about middle income groups in the United States today is the fact that they are predominantly from the blue collar class. The labor unions

never let us forget that in 1890, the income of the white collar workers was double that of the blue collar workers; by 1943, manual workers had overtaken the white collar workers, and they have since gone beyond them.

The results of this trend are seen in a survey of family incomes. According to the Editors of FORTUNE, in 1953, there were 15.5 million non-farm families with an income between $4,000 and $7,500, that is in the middle income range. 1.4 million of these families, or 9% are headed by laborers or service workers; another 3.5 million are headed by operatives, factory workers, miners, truck drivers and the like; 4 million are headed by foremen, and craftsmen, who make up the skilled element in the labor force. In other words, 9 million middle income families, or 60% of the total are the families of workers, of the blue collar class. There are also 2 million families of workers in the class above $7,500. The remaining 40% of the families in the middle income bracket are in various positions of the white collar class. 4 million families are those of professionals, proprietors and managers. It is very revealing that only 2.4 million families in this bracket are headed by clerical and sales workers.

If only the men who are white collar workers are considered, their salaries compare favorably with those of blue collar workers. It is the women who come off badly. The median salary of women who were managers and officials was almost as low as that of men who were laborers.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

in the next issues of

SOCIAL ACTION DIGEST:

* Economic Aspects of the Cold War
* Responsibility and Training for Action
* Foreign Aid
* Management Study: How to Criticize Effectively
* Profit Sharing
* Important New Books
* Etc.

SOCIAL ACTION DIGEST is stimulating -- and YOU will be, too!

Are you a regular subscriber? -- Why not send a $1.00 gift subscription to a friend? He will be grateful to you. Please, make checks payable to:
Institute of Social Order, Loyola University

Finally, in any discussion of incomes, a careful glance must be cast at installment buying. It is evident that blue collar workers are relying much more heavily on installment buying than the white collar classes. Thus another interesting institution of American life is making available to blue collar people the means to purchase the services and symbols of a white collar world.

The White Collar Society

The sociological literature and much of the popular writing have not been very complimentary to the white collar way of life. It is represented as a society without roots or tradition, in which people strive, often frantically, to do the things or buy the things which will mark them as acceptable to the people with whom they associate.

If we were to take three well known books of recent years, we could summarize rather easily the major criticism leveled against it: C. Wright Mills, WHITE COLLAR; William H. Whyte, THE ORGANIZATION MAN; and David Riesman, THE LONELY CROWD. The list could be extended without end, but these three will suffice as a focus for our discussion.

(To be continued)